



This Old Column

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The Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission functions in cooperation with the City of Indianapolis to preserve both the character and fabric of historically significant areas and structures in Marion County. The commission identifies and protects historic properties through the creation of historic area preservation plans and issues Certificates of Appropriateness for land use changes, building alterations, new construction and demolition.

The Commission was formed in 1967 by state legislation and currently has eight commissioners appointed by the mayor. The Commission and staff use the design guidelines from the historic area plans to review applications submitted in addition to the policies and procedures developed to ensure timely and fair review. The design guidelines of each area plan are developed based on nationally and locally accepted standards and are enforced by The Commission through state statute.

To insure that proper procedure is followed, IHPC encourages property owners to notify staff as soon as they are thinking about doing any work to their building. Although IHPC only reviews the exterior of buildings within its jurisdiction, work on the interior can ultimately effect the exterior of a building and should therefore be brought to the attention of staff at IHPC. IHPC encourages residents of any IHPC historic district to obtain a copy of the Policies and Procedures Manual and the historic area plan for their district to learn more about how the review process works. In addition, the office of the IHPC has an extensive collection of literature on historic preservation as well as a copy of each file for the buildings within its jurisdiction.

Once a Certificate of Appropriateness is granted, the applicant can obtain building permits unless otherwise indicated on the certificate. Permits are required by law to do any kind of construction including restoration, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and demolition work to name a few. It is critical to the applicant that the certificate is read over upon receipt to ensure a complete understanding of any stipulations that may be included.

The process of obtaining approval for a project can be simplified by following these few tips:

- Know ahead of time exactly what the project entails.
- Talk with IHPC early in the process.
- Make an appointment to ensure staff has enough time to assist you. Find out from staff if a hearing is required.
- If a hearing is required, do not forget to send notices to surrounding property owners and the affidavit to IHPC staff.
- Provide documentation including photos, architectural site plans, elevations, and floor plans.
- Obtain any necessary permits once you have received your Certificate of Appropriateness.
- Contact staff immediately if plans change during construction. Changes can often be accommodated by staff.
- Display the Certificate of Appropriateness in a visible location from the street along with permits. An extension is needed if the work is not completed within one year.

Reviewing restoration is different than reviewing new construction. A few things to keep in mind about restoration are 1. Retain as much of the original historic material as possible, 2. Repair refers to fixing the material that exists and not adding significant amounts of new material 3. Replace refers to removing existing material and adding new material or simply adding new material where none existed and 3. Rot does not always equal replacement. As for new construction, a few things to keep in mind are 1. Building a house that looks exactly like a historic house may confuse future preservationists about what the architectural styles were in 2001, 2. New construction should compliment its surroundings, 3. Consider setbacks, orientation, spacing, height and mass of the building as it relates to the streetscape, 4. Consider style, fenestration, foundation, entry and materials.

The IHPC is a public entity to help serve everyone's needs. If you have questions about a project, you can review the file in our office. We strongly encourage that if you are thinking about a project to consult your neighborhood organization as well to ensure that your plans are not an issue of opposition. If you have any questions please give us a call at 327-4406. Our web site is www.indygov.org/histpres/